Research on Reverse Migration in Japan: (?) Personnel Transfers

Research on Reverse Migration in Japan: (II) Personnel Transfers

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1 Introduction

In the first paper in this series (Wiltshire 1979) we discussed various problems associated with the use of the term "U-Turn" in research on reverse migration in Japan. In brief, this term has been used in two quite distinct ways; first, to describe the relationship between dominant and reverse migration streams, and second, as a metaphor for various forms of return migration.

The first paper also included the following quotation from an early paper by Kuroda:

> "This new wave (of migration) may be called a "U" Turn, or return migration, mainly because an increasing number of the out-migrants from metropolitan regions are people who are going to their own local places of origin." (Kuroda 1969 p. 2916)

Hisaeda (1972) attacked Kuroda's ideas on the relationship between dominant and reverse migration streams on a number of grounds, one of which was that by stressing the role of return migration, Kuroda appeared to overlook the possibility that observed increases in the volume of reverse migration streams could have been brought about by forms of migration that do not necessarily involve a return, such as migrations associated with transfers of personnel between the various branches of large private companies and national government agencies. Hisaeda also suggested that forms of migration such as that associated with personnel transfers can be expected to have increased in importance over time, as a direct result of economic and social development in the provinces. Hisaeda's views were subsequently attacked by Okada (1973), but unfortunately neither author was able to provide any evidence to support or refute the idea that personnel transfers might account for observed increases in the volume of reverse migration streams, nor indeed to indicate just how important migrations of this type might be.

At the present time the amount of information available on migrations associated with personnel transfers is still very limited, but it does at least offer some clues concerning the relative importance of such migrations within reverse

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migration streams. In subsequent sections of this paper we take a brief look at some of the information that is available and discuss its implications.

2 The relative importance of personnel transfers

Various surveys covering the reasons for out-migration from prefectures located within the metropolitan regions of Japan have been undertaken by the governments of the prefectures concerned. Perhaps the most comprehensive of these surveys is that undertaken by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government over the period from May 1971 to April 1972 (Tokyo-to 1973). In this survey each individual who registered a change of residence with the authorities during the period covered by the survey was required to state the dominant reason for his or her move. In addition, the number of dependants who had accompanied the registrant in the move was ascertained, and by assuming that the movement of dependants could be attributed to the reason stated by the registrant, it was possible to classify all migrants, including dependants, according to a predetermined set of migration reasons, one of which was "moved because of a personnel transfer".

In Table 1 we present two indices of the relative importance of personnel transfers within migration flows to six provincial regions, for both registrants and

Table 1 The relative importance of migrations associated with personnel transfers within migration streams from Tokyo-to to six provincial regions, May 1971 – April 1972 Units: %

Regions	Registrants plus dependants (2)		Registrants only (2)	
	Migrations associated with personnel transfers as a percentage of:		Migrations associated with personnel transfers as a percentage of:	
	All migration from Tokyo-to	Occupation-related migration from Tokyo-to (1)	All migration from Tokyo-to	Occupation-related migration from Tokyo-to (1)
Hokkaido	37.7	53.3	26.6	40.8
Tohoku	21.2	33.9	15.8	26.8
Hokuriku	20.2	35.8	15.4	28.7
Chugoku	31.4	52.5	21.8	39.8
Shikoku	24.0	41.9	17.2	33.0
Kyushu	28.5	45.1	19.5	33.4

Source: Derived from *Tokyo-to* (1973): Table 17

Notes: (1) Defined as migration associated with personnel transfers plus migration associated with searches for employment, changes of employment and acceptance of employment, migration associated with the opening of a new business, and other forms of occupation-related migration. For further details see Tokyo-to (1973).

(2) For explanation see text

registrants plus dependants. The first conclusion that can be drawn from Table 1 is that personnel transfers do indeed account for a substantial share of reverse migration. In every case the proportion of all migration of residents plus dependants accounted for by personnel transfers exceeds 20%, and the proportion of occupation-related migration accounted for by personnel transfers always exceeds 33%. Second, it is clear that the indices for registrants plus dependants are in every case substantially higher than those for registrants alone. This indicates that migrations caused by personnel transfers involve a larger number of dependants per principal migrant than do other forms of migration. Third, the indices vary quite widely between these six regions. The reasons for this variation are perhaps best considered at the prefectural scale, which is unfortunately the finest areal breakdown that the original data permit. Ito, Naito and Yamaguchi (1979) show that many if not most personnel transfers that result in long-distance migration involve higher management personnel moving between the headquarters of large companies or government agencies located in Tokyo and branch offices located in the provinces, and especially in cities of major provincial importance. Thus we would expect that the presence of a major city within a given prefecture would result in a higher proportion of migrants moving into that prefecture because of personnel transfers than would be the case for prefectures lacking a major city.

The predominantly inter-urban character of migrations associated with personnel transfers can be seen quite clearly in Table 2. The indices for Hokkaido, Miyagi, Hiroshima, Kagawa and Fukuoka Prefectures, each of which contains a large city of major regional importance (Sapporo, Sendai, Hiroshima, Takamatsu and Fukuoka respectively), are higher than those for all other prefectures located within the provincial regions listed, and substantially so in most cases. At the same time, however, they are lower than the indices for purely inter-metropolitan streams, such as those to Aichi (Nagoya), Osaka and Hyogo (Kobe).

3 Changes in the relative importance of personnel transfers over time

Having established that migrations associated with personnel transfers do constitute a substantial component of reverse migration streams, we now come to the question of whether or not such migrations have increased in relative importance over time. The only data available with which to examine this question again concern out-migration from Tokyo, and once again they are drawn from the reports of surveys conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

Selected results of the four most recent such surveys are presented in Table 3. A comment should be made about the comparability of the various figures in this table. Although the results of the 1971–72 and 1976 surveys are reasonably comparable in that they both cover a period of one year, comparison of the results

Table 2 The relative importance of migrations associated with personnel transfers within migration streams from Tokyo-to to provincial and selected metropolitan prefectures, May 1971 – April 1972

Prefectures	Registrants plus dependants (1)
Hokkaido	37.7
(Tohoku)	(21.2)
Aomori	15.6
Iwate	14.7
Miyagi	36.0
Akita	16.4
Yamagata	14.0
Fukushima	19.8
(Hokuriku)	(20.2)
Niigata	16.4
Toyama	25.0
Ishikawa	29.5
Fukui	23.4
(Chugoku)	(31.4)
Tottori	23.6
Shimane	15.3
Okayama	31.7
Hiroshima	41.0
Yamaguchi	25.6
(Shikoku)	(24.0)
Tokushima	31.8
Kagawa	42.5
Ehime	14.5
Kochi	2.6
(Kyushu)	(28.5)
Fukuoka	45.7
Saga	17.3
Nagasaki	19.6
Kumamoto	21.7
Oita	27.5
Miyazaki	10.4
Kagoshima	18.3
(Selected metropolitan prefectures)	
Aichi	50.5
Osaka	53.9
Hyogo	59.0

Source: Derived from *Tokyo-to* (1973): Table 17

Notes: (1) Migrations associated with personnel transfers as a percentage of all migration from Tokyo-to. For explanation see text.

of the 1957 and 1962 surveys with each other and with the results of the other surveys is made difficult by the fact that they each cover a period of only one month. The danger here is that there may be seasonal variations in the relative importance of migrations associated with personnel transfers. In addition, there

Table 3 The relative importance of migrations associated with personnel transfers within migration streams from Tokyo-to to provincial regions during various time periods

Units: %

Regions (2)	Registrants plus dependants (I) Migrations associated with personnel transfers as a percentage of all migration from Tokyo-to			
	April 1957 (3)	July 1962 (3)	May 1971 – April 1972	January 1976 – December 1976 (3)
Hokkaido and Tohoku	14.9	19.9	25.5	25.2
Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu	21.2	28.2	28.6	35.5
Hokkaido, Tohoku, Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu	17.5	23.4	26.9	30.5

Sources: Derived from *Tōkyō-to* (1957): Table 16, *Tōkyō-to* (1963): Table 15, *Tōkyō-to* (1973): Table 17, and *Tōkyō-to* (1978): Table 5.

Notes: (1) For explanation see text
(2) Okinawa Prefecture is included, in the Kyushu region, in 1976 only.
(3) Not including Hachijojima and other islands

are other differences in terms of the bases upon which the various surveys were conducted. For example, the 1976 survey was based upon only a small sample of migrants, and Okinawa Prefecture was included in this survey, as a part of the Kyushu region, for the first time. For these and other reasons, therefore, comparisons between the results of the various surveys should be undertaken with caution.

In any event, the conclusions to be drawn from Table 3 are decidedly mixed. Although the indices for the Hokkaido, Tohoku, Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu regions considered together do show a clear increase over time, this pattern breaks down as soon as we begin to disaggregate. In the case of the indices for Chugoku, Shikoku and Kyushu there is a pattern of increase over time, but the difference between the 1962 and 1971–72 indices is negligible, and in the case of the Hokkaido and Tohoku regions the index for 1976 is actually lower than that for 1971–72. Unfortunately it is not possible to disaggregate further and retain the results of the 1976 survey since they are not available, and would not be reliable anyway because of sample size problems, at a finer areal scale.

4 Personnel transfers and return migration

Even if personnel transfers do represent an increasingly important component of reverse migration streams, however, it is not necessarily the case that too much

attention has been devoted to the role of return migration within such streams if a large proportion of the personnel involved are in fact being transferred back to the regions from which they originally hailed. Unfortunately, none of the reports of surveys conducted by various metropolitan prefectural authorities contain information that would shed light on this question. One clue is provided by a sample survey of persons migrating into Kochi City over the July 1973-June 1974 period (Kochi-ken 1975). This survey revealed that of the 93 persons who moved into Kochi City from Tokyo-to as a result of personnel transfers, 32 (34.4%) were people who had been born and raised within Kochi Prefecture. The equivalent figure for persons who had moved in from Osaka as a result of personnel transfers was somewhat higher, 41.3%. There is no reason to believe, however, that these proportions are representative of the situation in other parts of Japan, and indeed, the fact that Kochi Prefecture has by far the lowest index in Table 2 suggests otherwise.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The very limited evidence that has been presented here suggests that personnel transfers do account for a substantial proportion of reverse migration in Japan. It is also quite clear that migrations associated with personnel transfers tend to be directed towards major provincial cities. Our observations in this regard are confirmed in Institute for Social Engineering, Inc. (1976 p. 80), who used the same data as that employed in the construction of Table 2, but arranged them rather differently. They classified prefectures located outside the major metropolitan regions as either 'intermediate' or "depopulated", and found that whilst personnel transfers accounted for 24.9% of all migration (of registrants, not of registrants plus dependants) from Tokyo-to to "intermediate" prefectures over the May 1971–April 1972 period, they accounted for only 15.4% of all migration to "depopulated" prefectures. What is not really clear, however, is whether or not personnel transfers can indeed be invoked to explain observed increases in the volume of reverse migration streams over time, and especially over the 1960's period. The evidence on this point is extremely limited, and the conclusions that can be drawn from it are mixed.

Almost all of the very limited number of studies devoted partially or exclusively to reverse migration that do pay some attention to personnel transfers do so on the basis of the composition of either the population in a particular area at a given time or the migration stream into or out of a particular area over a given period. The decision preceding migration is rather different in the case of personnel transfers than for most other types of migration, however, and this suggests that it may be time to move beyond purely area based approaches to the

subject and to adopt new approaches that reflect the underlying processes involved. A sample survey of migration into the rapidly urbanizing municipalities surrounding Sendai (Koyanagi 1977) shows that of 69 persons who moved into these municipalities from metropolitan regions as a result of personnel transfers, **55** (80%) did so because of "circumstances dictated by the company or office", and only **14** (20%) did so because they "desired a transfer". This particular result merely confirms the fact that the migration decision in the case of personnel transfers tends to be dictated more by the employer, be it a private company or a public agency, than by the employee who actually undertakes the transfer. This in turn suggests that the appropriate way of reaching an understanding of how migrations of this type come about would be through analysis of both the career paths followed by employees and the personnel policies and regional administrative structures of the companies and agencies concerned. In this context, research reported in Ito, Naito and Yamaguchi (*op. cit.*), which deals with the migration of higher management personnel in major banks and career bureaucrats in the Ministry of Construction, opens the way to an important new area for research.

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